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S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D

On the GENERAL FAST Day,

MARCH the 12th, 1762.

A T T H E

Parish Church of St. CATHERINE CREE.

By RICHARD PENNECK, M. A.

L O N D O N,

Printed in the Year MDCCLXII.



To the RIGHT HONOURABLE
F R A N C I S
EARL OF
GODOLPHIN, &c.

MY LORD,

THE present Publication derives its Source from your Lordship's Benevolence. In Despair of ever presenting an Offering worthy of your Lordship's Acceptance, I seize the present Occasion, happy, if it serve in any Degree to express the Sentiments of Gratitude with which my Heart overflows.

IN meditating on the Obligations, which we owe to the Almighty, as a Nation, the Transition to our own particular Interests is not surely unnatural. It was from hence arose a Reflexion which insensibly led me to acknowledge the Goodness of Providence in placing me under your Lordship's Protection,

DEDICATION.

tection, where I have experienced such Instances of Benevolence, as could only be equalled by that noble Manner, which accompanies all your Acts of Humanity, and gives them an additional Dignity and Lustre.

SHOULD the Picture, which is here drawn, of our present Manners, appear too highly coloured, I hope it will be considered, that the Nature of the Subject forbids to flatter, at the same Time that it undoubtedly leaves Room for a just Exception in such amiable and illustrious Characters, as not only do Honor to the present Age, but even to human Nature itself.

THAT your Lordship's Life and Happiness may be equally extended with the Wishes of the indigent and distressed, is the ardent Prayer of

Your LORDSHIP's most obliged,

and most obedient Servant,

British Museum,
March 18, 1762.

RICHARD PENNECK.



P S A L M iv. 5.

OFFER THE SACRIFICE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND PUT YOUR TRUST
IN THE LORD.

THE Interposition of Divine Providence in the Affairs of this Life is attended with such clear and convincing Proofs, that nothing but either the Want or the Abuse of Reason can ever induce Men to call it in Question. Each Day that passes over our Head, while it presents only with the common Objects of Nature, presents us at the same Time with a thousand Instances of the Goodness of God, which only pass unregarded, because they are every Day repeated. Thus the glorious Splendor of the Sun in vain offers itself to our Admiration, and we behold with equal Indifference the Rising and Setting of the most transcendent Object of the Creation.

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IN the same Manner, though surrounded with innumerable Proofs of the constant Protection of the Deity, we forget the Power to which we owe our Existence, the Hand to which we are indebted for our Support. For if our Gratitude were at all proportioned to the Mercies which we experience, every Day would afford sufficient Room for Thanksgiving, every Hour be crowned with Hallelujahs. But we expect Miracles should be worked in our Behalf, before we are awakened to a Sense of our Duty ; In vain does the Earth shed forth its fairest Fruits, the Vallies smile with Corn, and all Nature open its richest Store to indulge our Taste and gratify our Appetite, the beneficent Author and Giver of all these Things is forgot amidst such a Profusion of Luxury, and nothing will recall him to our Remembrance but Prodigies and Wonders.

INDEED were we endued at present with such intellectual Faculties, with such clear Prospects, as a Future State will disclose to us, our Admiration of the Goodness of God would not only be carried to a much greater Heigth, but would extort from us (how unwilling soever) every Moment of our Lives the
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warmest Acknowledgements, the most enlivened Raptures of Praise and Adoration.

BUT *even* in this imperfect State where our Faculties are too weak to bear a full and direct View of that amazing Splendor which furrounds the Throne of God, we want not, however, sufficient Conviction to raise our Admiration, to prove to us, that his gracious Protection is extended to all his Creatures, that he constantly guides our Steps, that not only the great System of the Universe is subject to the Direction of his omnipotent Hand, but that particular Events, the most inconsiderable States, the least important Societies, and even Individuals themselves are under his immediate Inspection, are actuated by his superior Influence, and either feel the Marks of his divine Vengeance, or partake of his fatherly Protection and Indulgence.

THE present Occasion has been very justly laid hold of to rouze our Attention to the Superintendency as well as Goodness of the Almighty. The continued Series of Success, which crowned our Undertakings, even beyond what might be expected from the best

concerted Designs, the most consummate Policy, and the most undaunted Courage, has long since demanded the warmest Return of Duty and Acknowledgment.

INDEED whenever we recall the melancholy Scenes which presented themselves at the opening of this just and necessary War, the Alarms we were under from the Designs of a subtle, ambitious and powerful Enemy, the Disadvantages we laboured under, and the Apprehensions we suffered for every Thing that was dear and essential to our Happiness, the Blessings which we have received must be enhanced to the highest Degree. Struck with the Prospect, that opens itself to our View, we cannot remain insensible of the Goodness of God, who averted the impending Stroke and saved our Lives from Destruction.

SUCH Interposition of Providence in our Behalf, however striking and conspicuous in itself, will appear the more worthy of our Acknowledgement, in Proportion as we look into ourselves and examine, whether we are justly the Objects of God's Favour or Indignation.

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SUCH and so universal is Vice and Immorality, that it would be the Height of Partiality as well as Presumption to imagine, that our particular Merits had been sufficient to bias the Almighty in our Favour, and ~~do~~^{he} draw down Vengeance on our Enemies. Conscious as we must be of our own Insufficiency to render us the Favourites of Heaven, let us acknowledge the real Source of our Successes, let us with all Humility of Heart confess, that not our Worth and Goodness, but the Compassion and Mercy of God have determined the Fate of Events and conducted us to the Gates of Triumph, that not "unto us, O Lord," but unto thy divine Protection may be ascribed whatever Dangers we have avoided, whatever Conquests we have gained.

BUT besides those particular Instances of divine Favor, which are the more immediate Objects of our present Attention, it may be asserted with equal Truth and Propriety, that there is no Nation (of which we have any Knowledge) that is in Possession of so many or such valuable Blessings as ourselves, so great indeed, as could never fail of rendering us the happiest People upon the Face of the Earth, did not

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Fancy, ever ready to create imaginary Evils, too frequently supply the Place of real ones, too frequently serve to embitter our Joys, and make us gloomy, impatient and discontented, under the mildest Government, in Possession of the choicest Treasures, that Art or Nature can furnish.

BUT to entertain a proper Idea of these Blessings, let us extend our Views to distant Nations: There let us take a Survey of arbitrary Power, lodged in the Hands of the most inhuman and tyrannical, the most insolent and barbarous, let us view the fatal Effects of Superstition, the Abuse of the true Religion, the slavish Dependance of the poor and ignorant, whose Consciences as well as their Persons are every Moment subject to all the Violences, that despotic Rage can suggest or uncontrouled Authority command. Then let us turn our Eyes back to this blessed Isle, where Religion and Liberty, where Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other---what a different Scene will be presented to our Sight!

HEAVEN after having granted us all the Conveniencies of Life, the Comforts of domestic Happiness
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and the Advantages of Situation, in a Degree far superior to those of other Nations, has in a manner exhausted its Blessings by bestowing on us a Constitution the most perfect that human Powers can conceive, or human Policy contrive, where the weakest Member is preserved from Violence, the powerful restrained from Injustice, every Enjoyment of Life is secured, all Property defended, Liberty of Conscience permitted, and Licentiousness not only branded with Infamy, but delivered up to condign Punishment. Can any Man except the most visionary Politician, who forms what never existed but in Idea, viz. a perfect Government in an imperfect State; can any Man, (I say,) point out to us a System of Laws more compleat or the Happiness of the People better secured than in this excellent Constitution?

BUT besides these general Advantages, which we have over other Countries, the particular Conjunction in which we stand at present, calls aloud for our Attention, and must awaken, if we are not insensible, the most grateful Sentiments we can entertain of the supreme Being. We are at War with such powerful Enemies, that even that invincible Courage,

which animates our Forces to the most warlike Enterprizes and most astonishing Acts of Heroism, might scarce be sufficient Proof against such unequal Numbers, had not Providence planted us in a Situation, that bids Defiance to all the Attacks and Machinations of the Enemy, and leaves us in full Possession of a Spot at once the safest as well as the most convenient and most delicious that can well be imagined.

WHY need we turn our Eyes to the poor desolated Germany to gain a proper Sense of our own Happiness and the Obligations which we owe to the Almighty?---The most dreadful Scenes that frighted Imagination can picture there rise up to our View: Horror and Desolation disfigure the Face of Nature: Continual Alarms terrify and distract the Inhabitants, while Fire and Sword serve to finish their Misery and compleat their Destruction. Such are the Triumphs which attend an unbounded Thirst of Power, such is the Havock which Ambition makes amongst unhappy Mortals.

BUT these are Miseries, to which we are almost entire Strangers. Situated as we are in full Enjoyment
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of Ease and Plenty amidst the Horrors of War, we hear, but at a Distance, as it were, of the Calamities which our Neighbours suffer; and though unfortunately but too much involved in the general Disorder of Europe, yet we feel not in so great a Degree as others the dismal Effects of War, or the shocking Consequences of intestine Commotions.

To these Advantages it will not be improper to add the fortunate Circumstance of having a wise and virtuous Prince to reign over us, a Prince whose early Declarations in Favor of Virtue and Religion have been followed by the most exemplary Conduct: a Prince endued with Wisdom sufficient to distinguish the best and ablest Counsellors, the Sense to submit himself to the most prudent Measures and Decisions, Goodness of Heart ever ready to reward the Meritorious, and Resolution enough to punish the Disobedient and the Profligate; a Prince, who wants no other Addition to his Happiness, but to see his gracious Endeavours take Place for restoring the Blessings of Peace to his People.

BUT as if these Objects were too near us, or too
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familiar to our View to merit Attention, how seldom do we regard them as Blessings from the Hand of God? We are indeed so accustomed to the same Round of Enjoyments and Pleasures, that we are almost inclined to expect them as natural Consequences of our Existence, regardless of the Interposition of that divine Being, whose Providence presides over every Event. For as it is an Impeachment of the Goodness of God to suppose that as soon as he formed the Universe, he dismissed it immediately out of his Hand and abandoned it to Chance and Accident, so we must be either inattentive to Reason, or ungrateful in the highest Degree, not to acknowledge that constant Care and Superintendency that directs us in all our Designs and crowns our Labours with Success.

YET, in Reality, should we enquire (an Enquiry we are never fond of making) should we enquire what particular Merits we have that should entitle us to such Favors from Heaven, it is too much to be feared, that the Reflexions which naturally occur to us, would rather tend to humble than exalt us in the Opinion we may entertain of our Deserts. We
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can return nothing to God but Acknowledgment : the most acceptable Offering we can ever make to him is the *Sacrifice of Righteousness*, and the greatest Proof we can ever give of our Gratitude is a strict obedience to his Laws, an inviolable Attachment to Truth, to Virtue and Religion.

IF Disobedience then to the Commands of Heaven be the highest Mark of Ingratitude for the Benefits we are constantly experiencing, how necessary is it for us to humiliate ourselves before the Throne of God : how necessary, amidst the Dissipation of the World, that an Hour should be appointed for us to consider our Ways, to lament our Offences, to deprecate the vengeance of Heaven, and in all Humility and Lowliness of Heart to confess, that the Vices, the Immoralities, the Iniquities, we are perpetually committing (without the divine Mercy) must infallibly have drawn down upon us the just Indignation of the Almighty ?

WE are now summoned, by the Voice of Royal Authority, to prostrate ourselves before the offended Majesty of Heaven. Such is the Depravity of the
Age

Age we live in, that it requires no satirical Pen to swell the Vices of it to an unnatural Deformity: They appear but too enormous, when painted in their genuine Colours.

BUT not to accuse unjustly, where it would be a much greater Pleasure to find Room for Approbation, we may appeal to the Sense and Knowledge of the most impartial, whether the Manners, which characterize the present Age, do not justly suggest a Suspicion, that men are no longer actuated by such Principles, as either regard the Good of Society, or arise from proper Sentiments of Dependance on the Deity. Blasphemy and horrid Imprecation too frequently preside in our Streets, instead of that Conversation, which is becoming the Followers of Christ, and Numbers are impiously calling for the Judgments of God on their Heads, which they know not how soon they may be compelled to feel. Vice and Debauchery have descended amongst the lowest of the People: Idleness renders them incapable of providing for themselves and Families, plunges them into Distress, and at last leaves it to the Law to terminate their Misery.

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SHALL we look then for a fairer Picture of Purity of Morals in the Lives of the rich and opulent? - - - - Description perhaps would find it difficult to determine, whether Levity or Corruption, Insignificance or Iniquity, serve in a higher Degree to mark their Characters, and distinguish their Manners; For a constant Residence amidst Noise and Pleasure inevitably obliterates all the Impressions of Piety: Thus all serious and attentive Thought is lost and swallowed up in the Number of daily Amusements and Dissipations, while the Hand, that supports us, is forgot; the Eye, that surveys our Actions, is no longer regarded.

WHENEVER therefore we take a Survey in History of the many Examples of divine Justice exercised sometimes in punishing, sometimes in destroying iniquitous Cities or Nations, we cannot avoid being awakened to a Sense of our Duty and Obedience, we cannot but wonder how we ourselves have escaped the Resentment of the Almighty.

IN vain does the Light of the Gospel shine forth to point out to us the Way to Immortality: In vain
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is the Terror of inconceivable Punishments set before our Eyes to deter us from plunging into Wickedness: The Light of the Gospel is rejected and treated with Insult, and all our Hopes of Salvation maliciously despised or industriously traduced. Can we wonder then, that, when the Hopes and Fears of another World have lost their Influence, Men should abuse the World they live in, by indulging the worst of Passions, and never regard the Laws of Man, when once they have learnt to disregard those of their God?

UNDER these Circumstances, can we esteem ourselves proper Objects of the Favor of God? Can we assign any Cause or shew any Reason, why the Almighty has not long since delivered us over a Prey to our Enemies, swallowed us up in Earthquake and buried us in universal Ruin? If any Reason can be assigned in our Behalf, it must be this, --- that the Mercy of God is as unbounded as the Wickedness of Man.

MAY these Considerations sink deep into our Hearts, and influence our future Conduct! We are
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still in the Power of the Omnipotent : He may yet extend his Arm of Vengeance : Let us, while yet the evil Day is at a Distance, let us throw ourselves in all Humility before the Throne of Grace, and intreat the Almighty to avert the impending Stroke, and save our Souls from Destruction.

IN the Fulness of Health and Plenty, when every Thing smiles around us, we are too apt to shut out the Consideration of that benevolent Being, to whom we owe the Enjoyments we are in Possession of. Indeed the Misfortune is, that we seldom meditate on religious Subjects, but when we are depressed, and in a melancholy Humour. Hence we unfortunately associate the Idea of Gloominess and Horror with that of Religion : hence every Object is saddened, and the Light which is let in upon the Soul (like that which passes through old Gothic Temples) tends only to generate Superstition, and impress upon the Mind Sentiments directly contrary to those which true Religion would inspire.

WOULD we imprint a just Idea of the Almighty in indelible Characters on the Soul, let us think on
God,

God, when our Minds are serene, our Situation easy, our Faculties perfect, when no Indisposition of Body tends to weaken our Spirits, no intruding Passion disturbs or interrupts our Contemplation. Then shall we think on a Being, on whom depend all our Hopes and Expectations, to whom we are indebted not only for our Existence, but for our constant Preservation, to whom the greatest Offering that we can ever pay is that of a grateful and obedient Heart : who is always pleased with the sincere Endeavours of his Creatures to serve him, however imperfect, but will not fail to punish, in the most exemplary Manner, ungrateful, perverse and obstinate Offenders.

THE Inferences, that naturally result from these Reflexions, considered in a political as well as religious View, have a Tendency to affect our Morals.

THE Principles of Virtue and Religion constitute as much the Basis of our Happiness in civil Society, as the Exertion of our natural Powers and Abilities contributes to the Improvement of Arts, the Extent of Commerce and the Grandeur of a Nation. Thus the

the Interests of Society, (with which the Interest of each Individual is unalterably connected) should excite us to cherish those Principles, upon which the general Felicity is founded, and to add to our foreign Acquisitions the Important one of domestic Virtue; that when Posterity shall look with Astonishment on the History of our present Transactions, their Admiration may be raised as high by a View of those Virtues, which displayed themselves at Home, as by that Series of repeated Success, which attended our Arms Abroad.

BUT if the Prospect of future Fame be at too great a Distance to affect our present Behaviour, let at least the Instances of God's Goodness, which we have experienced, make an Impression on our Hearts and influence our Morals.

THE surest Way to obtain the Favor of Heaven is to conduct ourselves upon the unerring Principles of Honor, Virtue and Religion. God, who is every where present, is a Witness of each Action of our Lives, and penetrates the Motives and Inducements, that actuate us in all our Proceedings; can we expect

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the divine Interposition then, if we do not endeavour to deserve it, or can we justly hope for any future Mercies from the Omnipotent, if we are ungrateful for those, which we have already received?

THE Hand of Providence, which in the Day of Battle can save or destroy, has hitherto protected us. Would we wish to have the Almighty's Influence continued, let us examine our Hearts, awaken our Consciences from their Lethargy, reform our Lives, and we may rest assured of the Protection of Heaven. Supported by such Assurances, and inspired with the delightful Thought of pleasing the Almighty, we shall never fail of Success in all our Undertakings, we shall be animated to the most arduous Pursuits, and most heroic Enterprizes; till at the last and most important Triumph, we shall conquer Death itself, we shall be able undauntedly to cry out, *Oh Death, where is thy Sting? Oh Grave, where is thy VICTORY?*

F I N I S.